CONFIDENTIAL

127

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: January 27, 1948

SUBJECT: Arab office views on Palestine

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Cecil Hourani, Representative of the Arab Information Office.
Mr. Henry S. Villard, S/P

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Dr. Hourani called at his request to discuss various matters of interest to the Arab peoples. He said that he was exploring the possibility of having a high level representative of the Arab League stationed in Washington to discuss with the U.S. Government matters of common concern. Dr. Hourani said that in his opinion it was better to have no Arab League at all rather than a weak one, and that it was his hope the League would be strengthened in this way.

Dr. Hourani said that he had in mind for this position Camille Chamoun of the Lebanon, but was doubtful whether he would accept it. He thought one possibility was Musa Alami, who however is persona non grata with the Grand Mufti. He did not think that Azzam Pasha, Secretary General of the Arab League, Cairo, would be a suitable appointment. In response to his question as to what we would think of such a representative residing in Washington, I said I felt sure there would be no objection but that I did not see how this Government could grant him any privileged diplomatic position in the conduct of our official relations.

Our conversation then turned to Palestine. Dr. Hourani observed that while the Arab states might differ among themselves on a number of things, they were firmly united in the question of Palestine. He said that he himself was now

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reasonably confident that the U.S. would not attempt to enforce partition and that a more favorable outcome to the Arabs would be forthcoming than the present UN recommendation. Dr. Hourani said that it was the opinion of the Arabs that the U.S. had been misled into supporting partition by the idea that the Arabs would not fight. Events have now demonstrated that this assumption had been wrong, therefore the U.S. would be justified in changing its position.

I asked Dr. Hourani what success he expected the Arabs to have in their fighting. He said he was optimistic in regard to developments in this respect. King Abdullah of Transjordan, which was not a member of the UN, would probably lead the Arab forces and this avoid difficulties with the UN. Dr. Hourani expected that unless the Jews receive assistance from the U.S., they would slowly be driven into the Tel-Aviv area of Palestine.

Dr. Hourani said that the Arabs believed they had evidence to the effect that President Truman had personally telephoned the heads of foreign governments, such as the President of Haiti and the President of the Philippines, asking them to support partition in the General Assembly. I said I felt certain President Truman had not done this. Dr. Hourani said that nevertheless the Arabs had evidence that the White House had intervened with long distance telephone calls of this character.

S/P:HSVillard:jam:mw